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MAY 2010

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wish, reflections on
motherhood and more**





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.....
Amy Clark RD, LD



WELCOME TO Facets

Fac-et - n.

1. One of the flat surfaces cut on a gemstone.
2. The particular angle from which something is considered.

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Being a mother is my greatest joy.

Clockwise from front left, Daisha Cox, Elaine Cox holding Phoebe Cox, Lindsay Cox, Al Cox, Dan Cox and Austin Cox.

By Nirmalendu Majumdar/Facets

Candy Anderson lives in Jewell with her husband. She is the mother of two and grandmother to six. She is the food service director for South Hamilton School District. Her days are filled with family, friends and respites in Okoboji. Candy enjoys writing about life experiences and her passion for culinary arts.



Debra Atkinson, M.S., CSCS, graduated from Iowa State where she's also taught in the department of kinesiology for 12 years. She has been a fitness professional — writing, speaking and practicing for 25 years. She runs, bikes, swims and plays golf in Ames with her son and Old English Sheepdog.



Peggy Best is an administrative specialist for the Center for Crops Utilization Research and the BioCentury Research Farm at Iowa State University. She is married and resides in Ames. She has one son, one stepdaughter and two grandsons.



Clare Bills is a writer, speaker and artist living in Ames. She holds a master's in journalism and is also a graduate of the Institute for Children's Literature. After working in public relations and news radio for many years, she now writes for magazines and online Web sites, as well as adding decorative touches to homes and businesses in Central Iowa.



Jenn Boccella will be a senior at Iowa State University, majoring in communication studies/journalism. She is involved with the campus ministry The Salt Company and enjoys quality time with family and friends.



Deborah Bunka is a freelance writer, graphic designer and jewelry maker. Her interests include politics, literature and geology. A Canada native, she moved to Ames 12 years ago where she lives with her husband and two children.



Amy Clark received a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University in 2003, with an emphasis in dietetics. Her memberships include the American Dietetic Association and Iowa Dietetic Association. She is certified in adult weight management. Her goal at Hy-Vee is to increase awareness in the community of the impact nutrition can have on well-being. She encourages people to focus on making healthy lifestyle changes one step at a time.



Kathy L. P. Cook, M.D., is a Board Certified Dermatologist. She works at Skin Solutions Dermatology in Ames.



Joshua Duchene is a licensed cosmetologist who works at a salon in Ames.



Karen Petersen graduated from Iowa State University in family resource management. She is a Certified Financial Planner, has three grandchildren and can be found kayaking on Ada Hayden Lake.



Contributors

Foster care families serve a special need in community

May is National Foster Care Month

By MARY HALSTRUM, Facets Editor

In 2006, Iowa KidsNet says, there were 510,000 American children in foster care, and 129,000 children waiting to be adopted.

Iowa KidsNet is comprised of six social service agencies: Lutheran Services in Iowa and Quakerdale; Boys and Girls Home and Family Services; Children's Square U.S.A./Child Connect; Family Resources; and Four Oaks Family and Children's Services. Iowa KidsNet recruits, trains, licenses and supports all of Iowa's foster and foster/adoptive families. The agency also works with the Iowa Department of Human Services to place children with qualified foster families.

"There is no 'typical' foster family," says

Amy Juhnke, director of marketing and communications for Iowa KidsNet. To be considered, foster parent applicants must be 18 years old, pass a background check and submit to a home study for several months. Then applicants will undergo 30 hours of training with the end goal of becoming licensed.

"When a child enters the foster care system, the first priority is to keep the child near his biological family as the ultimate goal is to eventually reunite the child with the biological family as long as it is a safe environment for the child," Juhnke says. "The second priority is to keep the child in the same school district to lessen the trauma of being uprooted and taken away from friends and family."

Iowa KidsNet uses a statewide database to match foster kids with foster families. There are currently 88 foster families in the Story County area. Juhnke says foster families that are Latino, Native American or African American, those that can take on kids with special behavior or emotional needs, those who can take on three or more siblings, and those that can take in teenagers are much needed.

"Foster families can help stop the cycle of child abuse and neglect by educating and/or mentoring the parents of children in foster care," Juhnke says. "Stepping in

and helping kids reach their potential will also help them make healthy choices if they become parents themselves."

Stacey Maifield, communications coordinator for Iowa KidsNet, says, "Just being somewhere where a teenager can have a family dinner, the simple things, they mean a lot."

Elaine and Al Cox, of Gilbert, and son and daughter-in-law Dan and Lindsay Cox, of Ames, are doing their part in addressing the foster care needs of Story County.

Elaine, 63, and her husband have fostered more than 60 children over the years. She is a registered nurse in pediatrics at McFarland Clinic, and the couple has two biological children and four adopted children.

"I feel kids need a chance," Elaine says. "Most kids in foster care are there because of what their parents have done, not what the child has done. It's unfortunate that some foster care children get the 'naughty children' stigma."

Elaine and Al fostered children after years of trying unsuccessfully to have their own biological children. When all was said and done, however, they adopted four children and Elaine gave birth to two sons.

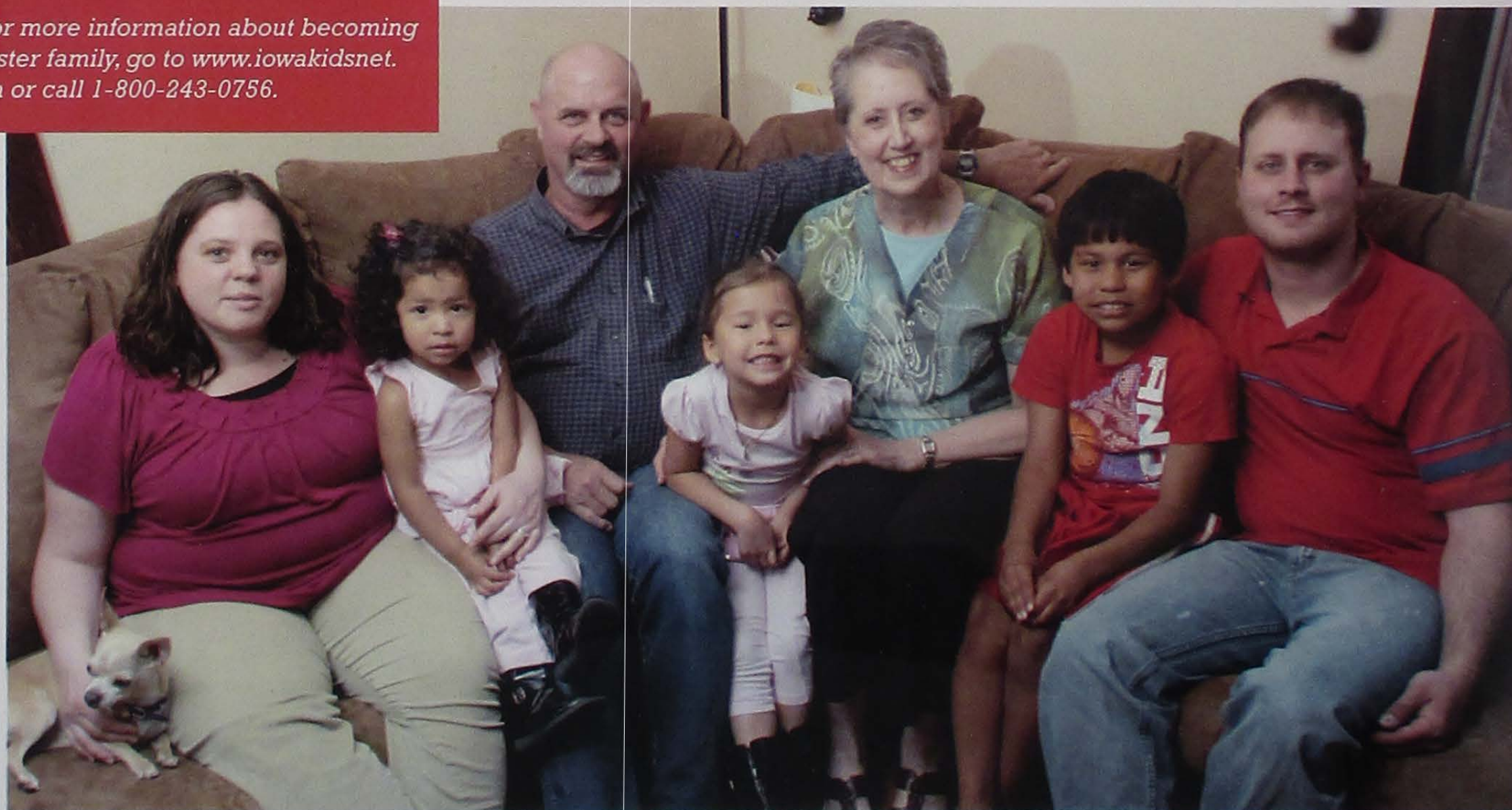
"Spiritually, God has given me a great

How are foster families found?

- Current foster families recruit friends and extended families.
- Foster family parties, similar to home-sales parties, but designed to recruit new families.
- Faith-based communities such as churches.
- Direct outreach to professionals such as school counselors, medical professionals, child care providers and teachers.

For more information about becoming a foster family, go to www.iowakidsnet.com or call 1-800-243-0756.

Foster care please see page 5



From left, Lindsay, Phoebe, Al, Daisha, Elaine, Austin and Dan.

By Nirmalendu Majumdar/Facets

Foster Care continued from page 4
capacity for children," she says. "I think being a foster parent has made me a better parent for my own children."

Elaine also teaches foster care parenting classes at the Youth and Shelter Services in Ames, which is a subcontractor with Iowa KidsNet.

Dan and Lindsay Cox adopted a trio of siblings this past year.

"We had tried for about four years to have children, and it hadn't happened," Lindsay said. "Adopting these children is another way to grow our family."

Austin, 8, Daisha, 5, and Phoebe, 2, came into Lindsay and Dan's life during week seven of their foster parenting classes and never left. Lindsay works from home as an accountant, so her work schedule gives her more time to bond with their children.

"One of the things that make this so worthwhile is the kids not being disappointed anymore," Lindsay says. For example, Austin had been signed up to play soccer several times before being placed with the Coxes, but something would always come up to prevent him from playing. He signed up again, and nothing stopped him this time.

"Trust is really broken with foster kids," says Elaine, who still fosters a teenager.

"Kids need to be special to someone," says Lindsay, who sees more children for her and Dan on the horizon. "Our kids want us to have more kids."

Dear future foster parents,

I can honestly say foster care saved my life. I've been in foster care for 13 years. I came into foster care at age 4, and at that age it was easy to find foster homes for me. Everybody wants a child, just like everybody wants a kitten.

As I got older and was moved around, it got harder and harder to find homes for me. No one really wants a teenager. I don't know why. Maybe because they think there is no hope for us. I really don't know, but because of the lack of people wanting teenagers, I spent more time in shelter than most children have, and more time in group homes waiting for my caseworker to find someone to take a teenager with my history and emotional problems.

I used to be really depressed, from my childhood, and I never wanted to be around people so I wouldn't get close to people. No one wanted a depressed attachment disordered teenager. That's what I was told, but while I was in shelter, I met lots of teenagers that they couldn't find homes for. Plain and simple, there are not enough foster parents for teenagers. It's hard to find one for a teenage girl, but it's even harder to find one for a teenage boy. My brother was in a foster home when he was younger, but as a teen he has lived in group homes and shelters the entire time.

Think about what it's like to not have anyone stand up for you at parents' night for sports, or not having any grandparents for grandparents' day, or being the only one alone when you receive an award, or not having anyone to get excited when you get straight A's. To feel like you're not good enough because nobody wants you, getting asked out on your first date and having no advice from anyone, going through puberty without a clue of what's happening to you and not having anyone to explain it, having no one to help you pick out your prom dress, or anybody to show you what love truly is.

The foster care system needs foster parents for teens that want to help, that want to break through and believe. Foster parents saved my life. Foster care changed my life, and I have to say I'm a better person because of my foster parents through my teen years. When you're a teen, it is important to know someone cares and that you are not alone, because when you have nobody, life sucks. Meeting my foster parents changed me and let me know that I'm not worthless.

If you're interested in being a foster parent, please call Iowa KidsNet at 1-800-243-0756. We need you.

Sincerely, Charli, Fremont County, Iowa

How is abuse prevented?

There are several safeguards in the foster care system to prevent abuse, says Amy Juhnke, director of marketing communications for Iowa KidsNet. They include:

- Extensive home studies on foster parents renewed yearly.
- Announced and unannounced visits by Department of Human Services workers and social workers.
- Self-reporting by the foster family when an injury that might be misconstrued as abuse occurs.
- Support specialists dedicated to families that provide support in minor or crisis situations.

National Foster Care Month Event

What: Iowa KidsNet will present the movie "The Blind Side" and will feature an existing resource family talking about their experience with providing foster care.

When: May 2, 2 p.m.

Where: Cornerstone Church, 56829 U.S. Highway 30, Ames



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Wise words from Mom

By JENN BOCCELLA

In case you did not know, a new word was introduced into our vocabulary this new century, and that word is "momily." So when did someone come up with a word that describes those great one-liners mothers use when imparting wisdom or insight upon their children? The word was coined in 2006 by author Michelle Slung. "Googling" the word, one will find 19,000 Web sites identified with "momily."

The role of a mother is significant, and very early on in a life a child learns to listen to Mom. And the thing is, no matter the age of her child, a mom will always have words of wisdom, or momilies, to share. She freely gives of her wisdom without even being asked. Her insight into the ins and outs of life will one day be recalled, and maybe even appreciated, by her family for generations.

One of the first momilies a mother will undoubtedly pass along is the Golden Rule. As shoes are tied, coats zipped and lunch boxes handed off, a mom will quietly remind her child to, "Treat other people the way you want to be treated." This phrase, or something similar, is a piece of advice that is centuries old but still relevant.

As children enter the glory days of junior high, a mother begins to encounter new, "grown-up" attitudes from her offspring (some of which could use some adjusting). Somehow tweens think life is all about them. But Mom is quick to remind,

"The world doesn't revolve around you!" This is generally followed by, "Don't roll your eyes at me, young lady! You will appreciate my advice someday." Right she is, as always.

High school is yet another new season of life, not only for teenagers, but moms, too. Mom realizes time is getting short and she does not have much time left to share all the wisdom she has. Her child is experiencing a new level of independence: being in the possession of a driver's license. While excitement levels skyrocket for the child, Mom is ridden with worry. So, any time the child heads for the car, she will leave the house with one request from Mom: "Call me when you get there, just so I know you're OK."

After years of instruction, it is time for Mom to let her children go. Trusting that the spoken words of wisdom will have prepared them for the future, a mother can only watch her child become an adult. From that point on, the most significant words a mom can share with her child are, "I just called to say 'I love you'." No matter how old or far away from home a child is, hearing those three simple words is the best gift a mom can give.

Every mother plays a unique role in the life of each of her children. She is a source of security, comfort and understanding. Although at times her guidance seems inconvenient and unimportant, with age comes understanding and an attitude of gratefulness for every bit of advice. And, interestingly, many of those memorable "momilies" will be used time and time again.

On a personal note, some of the best advice I have ever received comes from my 89-year-old grandmother, my mother's mother. Ever since I was a little girl, and even as recently as last week, Grandma has always told me, "You will never miss what you never have." Throughout my high school and college career this bit of insight has served me well. Thanks, Granny.



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Shawn Blaesing-Thompson participates in a bicycle race in 2008. She was pregnant with her son at the time.



Putting a mother's wish in action

By DEBRA ATKINSON, MS, CSCS

*My wish for you is that life becomes all that you want it to,
Your worries stay small and your dreams stay big,
You never need to carry more than you can hold,
And while you're out there getting where you're getting to,
I hope you know somebody loves you and wants the same things too,
Yeah, this is my wish.*

Rascal Flatts got it right. Not too many mothers could disagree with the lines from this popular song. Mothers want their children to have it better than they did. They want to hope they've given their children wings to fly. Even when the wish comes true means someone leaves the nest.

Instilling the wide continuum of qualities one hopes her child will have isn't easy. To have the right balance of empathy, concern and caring for others while being able to stand up for what's important and be assertive when it matters seems a daunting task. To give a child not just the ability to dream, but the belief that he or she can make those dreams come true, isn't that the wish? Finding fulfillment not according to anyone else's standards but their own, being happy, whatever that is to you.

Motherhood, any new, old, or in-between mom will tell you, is the best job ever, even when it's terrible. A combination of motherhood and work fill the days of many central-Iowa moms. Yet full and fulfilled aren't the same thing. Many women come to the realization that they need something more of their own to refuel their souls, and find or get reacquainted with fitness goals and carve time of their own to do it. So it was for Shawn Blaesing-Thompson, mother of Abigail, 6, and JJ, 1.

When her daughter was a baby, she did not take the time she needed to clear her head and

focus on her own needs. She learned first-hand what a mess life can feel like without something more than being busy. "I know how important it is now to have things that fulfill me outside of my family and my job," she says.

Now she trains, with the support of her husband, for up to two hours a day as she prepares for the Hy-Vee triathlon in June. She was a competitive swimmer growing up and reports that as her strongest sport now, though she also practices yoga and often commutes to work. She's obviously not only an athlete, but lives the active lifestyle. To people who think she's crazy to want to

race, for her it's about breaking through her personal limitations and reaching for the next level.

Her daughter, Abigail, is growing in the same path. Through swimming lessons, soccer and a training-wheel-free cyclist, Abigail enjoys the active life alongside her parents (Dad is also an avid runner). They have yet to see what will become of baby JJ, but it's clear he'll need to keep up.

That JJ finds the same joy is Blaesing-Thompson's wish. Not necessarily the competitive spirit or the win, but the joy in effort and participation. With activity comes

A mother's wish please see page 8



Shawn Blaesing-Thompson with her children, Abigail, 6, and JJ, 1.

Contributed photos

A mother's wish continued from page 7

a freedom experienced less and less in overscheduled lives. With activity comes a confidence and self-esteem no one can give you. Mood changes, enhanced creativity and the achievement of goals that in themselves are rewarding – these small things can build great self-efficacy in children and adults of all ages. Build them up. Make them strong inside and out so they can carry any load. Mommy see, monkey do

Are you exercising, Mom? Your children are watching. Are you enjoying it, Mom? Your children are watching that too. Whatever you're doing, they too will be more likely to do. The likeability factor in exercise for a lifetime of healthy activity is crucial. Think vegetables. Fruits are easy. Introducing less

palatable vegetables to a young child takes persistence and consistency. Seven times or more a child has to be exposed to the new flavor and texture to acquire a taste.

The first activity a child tries might not be the one for her. Keep trying, both that particular activity and others. Help her gain skills that will carry over to any sport. Play with her. As she acquires coordination and movement patterns, she'll get better and thus enjoy it more.

Think in two steps for active adult development. One is foundational kinds of skills like agility, reaction and quickness. They help with sport performance or improve enjoyment in all activities that lead to fitness in active adults. That is an important concern in our society. It isn't the norm anymore. Working sedentary all day and exercising at a

gym for an hour isn't the ultimate goal. If that one hour a day was the momentum toward a more active every day all day, we would as a nation make more progress. Raising children who think that way is much easier than trying to re-teach them when they are adults.

The second type of physical activity success development you can give a child is the skill set for a specific sport. Rehearse throwing technique, dribbling skills, swinging, and ultimately find an area they show interest in and have a coach help with sport-specific skills. Beware of committing a child to one sport too early. Like vegetables, they should sample many and explore to find what they like and enjoy. Let the hardest decision be whether to play basketball in the driveway or kickball in the back yard. Small worries for now, Olympic dreams later.

SOMETHING to look forward to

BY JOSHUA DUCHENE

Q: What is the 'hot' hair color for spring 2010?

A: Did someone say red? Red is my pick for spring. Only about 2 percent of the population has red hair, so there is always room for more red in this world. Red can make heads turn because of the beauty of the color, but it is also a color that can be fun and funky. Here are some of my tips for red hair this spring: For fair-skinned persons, a light copper base with a few highlights added will make for an elegant, natural look. Medium skin tones can pull off a medium copper hair color that will make the skin pop with a natural glow. Olive and dark skin tones will be able to go even darker with a deep red or burgundy hue. Any age can pull these colors off, and the younger generations might even try something a little flashier, such as true red highlights. The main thing to remember with red hair is to have lots of fun. PS: I would recommend not trying to dye your hair at home; it could result in the need for an extensive color correction.

Q: What is the best way to grow bangs out without getting annoyed and cutting them again?

A: Although we all loved our bangs at some point, there comes a time when it is just time to grow them out. Most of the time this is easier said than done. When you start growing your bangs out, I would recommend getting them evened out before the process begins, especially if they are cut

shorter on one side. By having them evened out, this will allow you to do more with them as they grow out, because they will not grow out shaggy or damaged looking. Next, try cute headbands or clips in your hair to keep your bangs out of your face while the bangs are growing out. As the bangs get longer, have your stylist begin to cut your bangs so they flow with the rest of your hair; an example of this would be to add layers to the front of your hair. Another trick while your bangs are growing is to do the side bang style; this will also help the shorter bangs flow with the rest of the hair. You may want to blow the bangs to the opposite side of the part and then use hair spray to keep them in place.

Joshua Duchene is a licensed cosmetologist who works at a salon in Ames. Do you have a question about hair or makeup? E-mail him at thesalon2008@yahoo.com.



Serve up better nutrition and health

By AMY CLARK, RD, LD

In our everyday struggle to balance work deadlines, hectic schedules and social engagements, family mealtime often ends up being compromised. Harvard University studies indicate that families who eat dinner together are twice as likely to have better diets than those who do not. Children who regularly sit down at the dining room table tend to consume more of important nutrients like calcium and fiber while consuming less dietary fats and empty calories.

Follow these strategies to enhance your family nutrition.

Make family meals a priority

Family meals help form healthy eating habits and are a great time for family communication. Make family mealtime a commitment and priority by adding it to the family schedule every day.

Think simple and plan ahead

Plan meals that are simple to prepare, such as pasta, pizza, crock-pot dinners and one-dish dinners. Pair them with bagged lettuce, fruits and vegetables, whole-grain breads and low-fat milk. If you struggle with what to serve at dinner time, Hy-Vee provides weekly suggested menus, Healthy-bites. Look for these during your next shopping trip. Your Ames Hy-Vee also offers a Simpler Supper Solutions program. You can stop by and sample that night's meal suggestion. These meals are planned and prepared by Iowa State University dietetic students.

Routines rule. Serve meals and snacks at regular times, and don't offer snacks close to those times. Nutrient needs are high for growing children, yet stomachs are small. Start off the day with breakfast, and see that children eat nutritious foods every three or four hours.

Kids can make meals happen

Children who take part in planning meals and grocery shopping are more likely to try new foods. Young children can help by setting the table or washing fruits and vegetables. Older children can help look for recipes and create shopping lists. Set a goal to try a new fruit or vegetable each week.

Snack smart. Keep healthful snacks on hand. Children's diets are often low in calcium and lacking fruits and vegetables. String cheese, portable yogurts, dried fruits or crunchy vegetables can fill missing nutrition gaps.

Go easy on portions. Kids need kid-sized portions. Offer your child a small scoop of each food and do not offer more unless they ask for it. Forcing kids to clean their plates encourages eating for reasons other than hunger.

Take inventory

Stock your shelves with a variety of foods. Put fresh fruit on the table. If you struggle with molding produce, prepare fruits and vegetable for the next few days by washing, cutting and placing them in snack-size bags right after your grocery shopping trip.

Limit soda pop and sweets

Pop or sweets on occasion is fine. It's OK to have one cookie — but not the whole bag. If your child's first choice is pop or sweets, consider a healthier alternative like water, milk, fruits or vegetables.

Get a move on

Turn off the tube and turn up the fitness. Enjoy activity as a family. Do anything — take a bike ride, go to the park, walk the dog, rake leaves or take swimming lessons.

Set limits on television, computer and video games. These activities do not burn calories nor do they promote physical activity. In fact, children who watch four or more hours of television per day are twice as likely to be overweight.

This information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.



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2 GREAT NAMES 1 LOCATION

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may CALENDAR

SATURDAY, MAY 1

The Holmes Brothers — The Holmes Brothers (bassist/vocalist Sherman Holmes, guitarist/pianist/vocalist Wendell Holmes, and drummer/vocalist and brother-in-spirit Popsy Dixon) mix Wendell's gruff and gravelly vocals with Popsy's soaring falsetto and Sherman's rich baritone, bringing the soul and spirit of gospel music into everything they perform. Show begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Civic Center's Temple Theater and tickets are \$26.50. Only children age 5 and older with tickets will be allowed into the theater for this production.

"Curtains" — "Curtains" unfurls backstage at the Boston tryout of a new, Broadway-bound musical. The show's biggest problem? Its talentless leading lady. When the star mysteriously drops dead taking her curtain call, Lt. Frank Cioffi is called to the scene. The star-struck Cioffi soon finds himself in the middle of egos and eccentricities and an unexpected romance. Will he be able to save the show and solve the case? Show is at 8 p.m. at the Des Moines Playhouse, 841 42nd St., Des Moines. Tickets are \$20 to \$35. Call 1-877-862-5621. Recommended only for those age 13 and older.

SUNDAY, MAY 2

Dressing Up Downtown — Join the Main Street Cultural District at a fashion show that will feature unique fashions created by more than 20 downtown businesses. There will be appetizers and desserts, fashionista photo settings and prize drawings. The

event begins at 2 p.m. at Wells Fargo, 424 Main St. in Ames. Tickets are \$10 and are available at the MSCD office, 312 Main St. in Ames.

"Curtains" — Show is at 2 p.m. at the Des Moines Playhouse, 841 42nd St., Des Moines. Tickets are \$20 to \$35. Call 1-877-862-5621. Recommended only for those age 13 and older.

THURSDAY, MAY 6

Taylor Swift — Show begins at 7 p.m. at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines. Tickets are \$60.50, \$50.50, \$26, and are available at the Wells Fargo Arena Box Office, all Dahl's Foods, online at dahlstickets.com, or charge by phone (866) 55-DAHLS.

FRIDAY, MAY 14-SUNDAY, MAY 16

"Sesame Street Live: Elmo's Green Thumb" — Sunny isn't just the weather forecast on Sesame Street — it's also the name of Elmo's sunflower friend! Join all your favorite friends on an amazing adventure as they help Elmo find a new home for Sunny in the all new Sesame Street Live stage show, "Elmo's Green Thumb." Various performance times at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines. Tickets prices are \$13, \$16, \$21 and \$29 through all Ticketmaster locations.

TUESDAY, MAY 18-SUNDAY, MAY 23

"Rodgers & Hammerstein's SOUTH PACIFIC" — Set on a tropical island during World War II, the musical tells the romantic story of two couples and how

their happiness is threatened by the realities of war and by their own prejudices. The beloved score's songs include "Some Enchanted Evening," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," "This Nearly Was Mine" and "There is Nothin' Like a Dame." Only children age 5 and older with tickets will be allowed into the theater for this production. Various performance times. Ticket prices are \$20 to \$67.50 and are available at all Ticketmaster locations.

ONGOING

Scottish country dance classes — Every Friday from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., second floor dance studio, Octagon Center for the Arts, 427 Douglas Ave. in Ames. For more information, call Gayle at (515) 233-6841.

Argentine Tango — Introduction and beginning figure from 4 to 5 p.m., open dancing and intermediate figure is from 5 to 7 p.m. Every Sunday at the Workspace in the ISU Memorial Union in Ames. Punch cards are \$30 for ISU students for five punches, and \$35 for the general public for five punches.

Square dance lessons — From 7 to 9 p.m., First Christian Church Disciples of Christ, 611 Clark Ave. in Ames. For more information, call Fred Grow at (515) 432-7530.

Dance social — Every Friday when classes are in session from 7:30 to 9:45 p.m., Forker Building, ISU. Cost of admission is free.

Easy, breezy decorating tips

By CLARE BILLS

Flowers are opening, song birds are trilling and the world outside our windows is bursting with color. Does the world inside your home pale by comparison? Try a few quick, easy decorating tips to change your inside landscape. Bring your kids or grandkids in on the fun and enjoy some creative time together.

Start by searching your home, garage or attic for items in need of a fresh look or new purpose. Search second-hand stores, flea markets and garage sales for terra cotta pots, vases, vintage buttons, china tea cups and saucers, trays, wooden deck chairs, vintage hankies or tablecloths, lace, lamps, beads, jewelry, picture frames, wooden bowls, watering cans, vintage milk bottles and, well, you get the idea.

Now grab your hot glue gun, run for ribbon and pass the paint. Let's get started.

- Adorn a plain umbrella with fabric paint or hot glue ribbons onto it in a pleasing pattern.
- Use filmy curtains, instead of a headboard, for an airy summer look in a bedroom. Stencil the headboard wall with a fun design.
- Light up old lamps by painting the base with metallic paints or gluing strands of beads around the edge of the lamp shade.
- Dress up curtains by pinning vintage earrings onto the tie backs. Or string beads onto a valance.
- Make a teacup bird feeder for your garden. Purchase a sturdy wooden dowel, about one inch in diameter, from a lumber yard or craft store. Paint it to suit your taste. Use a ceramic drill bit to screw the saucer into the top of the dowel. Next use heavy duty glue to attach the teacup to the saucer. Push the free end of the dowel into the ground next to a bed of flowers or a small tree in your yard. Fill the teacup with water or bird seed and enjoy watching the birds.
- Stencil a pail, terra cotta pot, watering can, birdhouse, vintage milk can or other

Teacup bird feeder.



interesting object. Mix patterns, such as flowers, birds and ladybugs, in interesting ways.

- Cover a message board with colorful fabric. Attach ribbons diagonally in both directions, leaving about four inches between each one. Thumbtack the ribbons where they intersect. Put family photos, small art or inspirational sayings between the ribbons.
- Take down heavy curtains for the summer. Use light fabrics to drape onto the curtain rods for a fresh, breezy look.
- Use vintage hankies or embroidered tablecloths as valances in a bathroom, bedroom or kitchen window. Use a curtain rod with clips to hold them in place.



Whimsical curtains and a stenciled headboard wall.

Photos by Clare Bills/Special to Facets

Picture frame magic.



- Tie or hot glue ribbons or braid around the top and bottom of a vase for added color and texture. Fill with shells, marbles or colorful stones.

• Spray paint a deck chair or picnic table. Cut simple shapes out of a potato and use them as stamps. Dip the stamp into paint and decorate.

• Paint picture frames to add depth and interest. Take the picture out of the frame and set it and the glass front aside. Gather several colors of metallic paints and use a sea sponge to add layers of color. Work one layer onto the other while the paint is still wet for a subtle look. Let it dry a few hours before putting the picture and frame back together. (See photo.)

• Decorate terra cotta pots with paint, ribbons or glitter. Use them to hold trinkets or plant flowers in them for a window sill or deck.

Enjoy transforming a few tired objects this spring and summer. Working with paint, fabrics or ribbons may lift your spirits and cheer those who enjoy the results.

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FOOD**bites**

Macaroni and cheese: a classic comfort food

By DEBORAH BUNKA

Nobody knows exactly who came up with the idea for macaroni and cheese. The first known written recipe for the dish dates from 13th century Italy, although with its thick, flat noodles and fermented cheese, it's probably not a recipe we'd recognize today.

The continuing popularity of macaroni and cheese among Americans, especially young children, likely has more to do with the introduction of Kraft's boxed version in 1937. More than a million boxes of Kraft Macaroni and Cheese are sold each day in this country. The introduction of an Easy Mac version in 2007 increased these sales by 10 percent.

My memories of macaroni and cheese when I was growing up in Canada (where we called it Kraft Dinner or KD for short), were not entirely pleasant. My father's cooking skills were quite limited, but he helmed the kitchen, for better or

for worse, each time my mother was in the hospital giving birth to another of my nine siblings. Kraft Dinner was his specialty. Unfortunately, he never really mastered the recipe on the side of the box, and the taste of scorched milk and burnt macaroni would not allow me to eat macaroni and cheese for almost 10 years after leaving home. It took motherhood, in the form of my own daughter's persistent requests to eat what her friends were eating, to get it back on the family menu.

What follows is not a recipe from the side of a box. Rather, it is a divinely decadent version of an American favorite. Beware, though, good homemade macaroni and cheese is not for the faint of heart. This recipe contains copious amounts of butter and cheese, which makes it a classic comfort food, but not one to be eaten regularly. Enjoy.

Mom's Macaroni & Cheese

Serves: 8

Ingredients

1 lb macaroni
8 Tbsp butter
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 cups milk
8 oz Velveeta cheese, cubed
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 tsp dry ground mustard
1/4 tsp seasoning salt
fresh ground pepper to taste



Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Fill a large pot with water and bring to a rapid boil. Add macaroni. Cook approximately seven minutes. Do not overcook. Drain and return macaroni to the pot. Add 1 1/2 cups of shredded cheese, (saving the remaining 1/2 cup for later use). Also add milk, Velveeta cubes, eggs, ground mustard, salt and fresh pepper. Mix well.

In a small saucepan, melt seven Tbsp of butter. Use some of this melted butter to lightly grease the casserole dish.

Transfer macaroni and cheese to the greased casserole dish. Top with remaining 1/2 cup grated cheese and (if desired), dot the top with one Tbsp of butter.

Cover and bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until the edges are golden brown and bubbly.

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Reflections on motherhood

May 2010 | FACETS | 15

By ROSE ELSBECKER

If you reflect back on what is most important to you as a mother, what thoughts come to mind? If you could have just one wish for your child, what would that be? What do you remember the most about your own mother?

These were the questions posed to a number of mothers, and it was quickly evident by their spontaneous replies that their children took center place in their lives and would always hold a special place deep within their hearts. It was the same for all the mothers interviewed, whether they were the child's birth mother, adoptive mother or foster mother — it made not one iota of difference. Nothing was more important to them than their children's well-being. They believed their children were their utmost responsibility. They noted that not only were their children their greatest joy, but their greatest burden as well, meaning they would give their all to see their children do well. They were also amazed at how their children became their best teachers of life's little lessons.

Not only did these mothers emphasize the importance of being there for their children, they were quick to point out that it was important to have fun along the way. It seems that this time of joy and heartache passed all too quickly. E.A. Horn said, "Motherhood is a blessing along with being a very busy time that goes much too quickly." It was clear from their hearts and in their eyes that no matter where their children would venture, their hearts would always go with them. As Bernadine Minnick puts it, "Once a mother, always a mother."

Giving their children a faith foundation to build upon was fundamental, according to mothers interviewed for this story. Each expressed the desire to see her child develop a strong sense of self, to discover and to, in their words, (no matter their religion) to nurture their "God-given" talents and abilities so they could be the best they can be, and to grow into responsible adults who would then, in turn, use those talent and abilities to make a positive impact on the world. Linda Jacobs tells us, "Patience, kindness and laughter are key to effective mothering ... you never stop loving and worrying about your children."

Jean Bower sums it up most aptly with the following: "... treat them (children) as precious people of great value ... plans must sometimes be set aside for awhile as you provide them with the nurture they need to develop into productive, stable adults someday. As a mother, you must give them a safe, secure nest where they know they are protected and valued. You need to give them a 'quiet' place deep with their being that says 'all is well. I have a place of peace

here within. I can weather what comes.' And you must have fun with them, and laugh, and let them be silly and dream, and do things that expand their understanding of who they are."

What would be that one wish for their children? They tell me it is not possible to choose just one. Lye Fung Lee exclaims, "Oh! More than one!" Their wishes for their children are to be happy, healthy and responsible, and to know peace in the world, that they might be safe from harm and have every opportunity to develop their god-given talents and abilities.

Mary Pothast struck a chord with her perspective: "... only one wish? If you could pick just one thing ... it would be this one

wish ... if they would one day be as proud of their children as I am of mine."

Let's not forget the question about what you remember most about your own mother, something that is important to you. That was easy. Time spent together, special traditions, her selfless giving and, most of all, Mom was somebody you could always turn to, someone you could always talk to, even now.

Those simple, precious gifts are something distance cannot sever and time cannot fade away. While a newborn baby tugs at a mother's heartstrings, there may come a time to "cut the apron strings." Yet everlasting will be the unspoken bond between a mother and child. Who could ask for more?



girlfriend's GUIDE to... FINANCIAL independence

Just Like Mom

By KAREN PETERSEN

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"I never talk about politics in front of my kids. When they are older, I want them to form their own political views; I don't want my political views to influence them." — This is a quote from the mother of a 12-year-old.

I was surprised and more than a little skeptical. I thought, "Is that really true? Does she believe the only things her children know about her is what she tells them?"

My children often didn't listen to my words, but paid attention to my actions. Many times I am surprised — sometimes pleasantly, sometimes not so pleasantly — when I see my behavior in my children. Children often don't hear what we say, but they see what we do.

So, if your children might grow up to be "just like Mom," what are you teaching them by the way you think and act about money? Here is a short quiz to consider your financial attitude on just three topics.

Are you concerned about the direction the economy is heading?

If you answered yes:

- Do you think the economy is improving?
 - Do you think the economy is getting worse?
 - Do you feel it is more cumbersome than ever to manage your financial details?
 - How often do you monitor and change your investments?
 - How many credit cards do you have?
 - How do you manage consumerism?
 - Do you live life today as though you had more income?
 - Even when the budget is tight, do you make small, yet extravagant purchases?
- How you think, act and talk about money has a profound effect on your children.

Are you concerned about the direction the economy is heading?

The consensus among economists is that the recession ended mid-2009. A Gallup survey from February 2010 found about half of consumers surveyed thought the economy was getting worse.

Why the disconnect? It could be "re-cency bias," the tendency to believe what



happened in the recent past will continue into the future.

Most of us have no ability to influence the economy, so worrying about the direction of the economy is of no value. Spend your energy where you do have influence: your personal economy.

Do you have an adequate cash reserve?

Have you automated your savings?

What is your plan for regular auto and home maintenance?

Adequate cash reserve, automated savings and routine maintenance put you in a position to minimize and be prepared for the unexpected.

Do you feel it is more cumbersome than ever to manage your financial details?

Most of us feel compelled to, and if not compelled, then think we should take an active role in managing our money. There are an overwhelming number of new ideas and possibilities to consider; too many details impact your ability to make sound decisions. Eliminate some of the financial redundancy:

- Roll old retirement plans into a single IRA.
- Keep all investment accounts with a single brokerage.
- Eliminate all but two credit cards.
- Use one, not multiple banks for checking and savings.
- Consider using your bank's online and automated bill pay service.

Consumerism

Consumerism is gravity.

This incredibly thought-provoking idea was presented by Dan Iannicola, President

Girlfriend's Guide please see page 17

and CEO of the Financial Literacy Group, in his Keynote address at the ISU symposium Building Family and Personal Financial Capability: Implications for Policy and Practice. We often say, "I deserve _____." You fill in the blank; it could be anything from a latte on the way to work each day to a trip to Disneyland.

Iannicola says, "You deserve what you can afford." Spending is not an entitlement. If you spend money (carry a balance on your

credit card) you don't have, you are limiting your future options.

Bemoaning the national economy, struggling with unnecessarily cumbersome financial details or using credit cards to enhance your lifestyle is probably not the message you want to give your child.

Focus on your personal economy, simplify your financial details and spend only what you can afford, because life is more than money.

Karen L. Petersen CFP® CDFA™

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SKINcare

May is skin cancer awareness month

By KATHY L. COOK, MD

May is skin cancer awareness month, and in looking back on articles I have done for Facets, I have not gone over this important topic until now.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer, and more than one million people in America are diagnosed each year. The most common risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. People with fair skin who sunburn easily are most at risk, although any skin type can develop a skin cancer. Other less common factors include repeated medical and industrial x-ray exposure, scarring from diseases or burns, occupational exposure to compounds such as coal tar and arsenic, and family history.

Actinic keratosis (often referred to as pre-cancer) is considered the earliest stage in the development of skin cancer. One in six people will develop actinic keratosis. These are scaling, rough and sometimes tender spots in sun-exposed areas. Some of these will become squamous cell carcinoma if they are not treated in the early stage. Treatment can be done by cryotherapy (freezing), topical chemotherapy (applying Rx medications), chemical peels, photodynamic therapy (a light-sensitizing chemical is applied to the skin and then exposed to a special wavelength of light) or curettage.

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of cancer worldwide. This occurs most commonly in sun-exposed areas. It has a variety of appearances that include fleshy or pearly bumps or red patches. These do not spread quickly and rarely spread any-



Skin care continued from page 17

where else in the body, but can get quite large and grow deeply if not treated early. Treatment is usually surgical, but sometimes the problem can be treated with chemicals.

Squamous cell carcinoma is the second most common skin cancer. Sun exposure is the most common cause of squamous cell carcinoma, but conditions such as organ transplantation, chronic skin ulcers, x-ray treatment (such as treatments for acne in the 1950s) arsenic ingestion (found in well water and was used in orchards), and toxic exposure to tars and oils can increase risk for squamous cell carcinoma. These appear as crusty, red areas or ulcerations on the skin. The location and size of the tumor determines treatment. Surgical treatment

is usually done as an outpatient procedure.

Malignant melanoma is the most deadly of all skin cancers. Approximately 7,700 people die from it in America each year. Melanomas can occur in a mole that was already there or may appear without a prior lesion. The ABCDEs of melanoma are now: Asymmetry (one half does not match the other half); Border irregularity (the edges are notched or ragged); Color (varied shades of tan, black, brown, red or white); Diameter (greater than 6 mm in size); and Evolving (significant change in size, shape or shade of color). People with a history of melanoma and those with a family history of melanoma are at increased risk and should be seen by a dermatologist for skin screenings.

Detection of skin cancers requires examination of the skin. People should rou-

tinely inspect their bodies for skin changes. If a growth is new or changing, it is wise to have your skin checked by a dermatologist. I am always happy to tell someone the spot is harmless, and it is not a waste of my time or theirs to have had it checked. However, if a spot is questionable, then diagnosing the lesion with a biopsy is a simple procedure.

The best defense is sun avoidance, including avoiding tanning beds. There is no safe tan. Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30, wide brimmed hats, sunglasses and protective clothing (light colored tightly woven or specially designed fabrics). Seek shade and avoid activities between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when possible. Children younger than six months should not be in the sun, but if it is unavoidable, use a sunscreen and consider one with Zinc oxide or Titanium dioxide.

Sage motherly advice

By PEGGY BEST

The phone rang the other day. My son had called to tell me thanks for the suggestion I had provided him about a problem he was having with his foot. I told him I was thankful I could help, and apologized for not thinking of it several months ago, when he first started to have problems. He said "Oh, Mom, you did, two or three times, I just didn't listen to you." "Well then", I smugly said, "So you are starting to realize that your old mom does know a thing or two, hmmm?" We laughed about that for a while, and then I realized that I was about that age myself before I took stock in anything my parents would tell me. They do say that parents get smarter as they get older, right?

It got me thinking about some of the things my mom would say to me that I would respond to with the famous eye roll, but that I now find I'm either living by or passing on to the next generation. For instance, "Don't eat raw cookie dough or you'll get worms!" I told my son that growing up; however, I still nibble on raw cookie dough myself, but there is always that little bit of fear that creeps up wondering if I could get worms.

When I was young, my mom liked to add a bit of humor (or fear) to her sage advice. I think growing up on a farm with lots

of dangerous things around made it easier for her to simply scare the bejeesus out of me than to sit me down and explain to me why I had to always remember to be careful. "Don't ever go near the pump house, because there is the biggest swarm of bumblebees in there you've ever seen!" she would whisper. I always assumed she whispered so the bees wouldn't hear us talking. You can be sure I never once went close to it, and most likely that warning kept me from being hurt playing around dangerous machinery. I'm also certain the fear of being eaten by the giant fish with the big teeth in

simple — "Be careful!" It is my favorite piece of advice — always has been, always will be. When he was very small I told him to be careful where he walked, be careful going up the stairs, be careful going down the stairs, be careful and chew your food thoroughly, be careful to not chew food while standing on the stairs, etc. etc. When he went off to school I would warn him to be careful crossing the street, be careful to not talk to strangers, be careful playing at recess. You can only imagine in his teenage years — there was a plethora of things to be careful about then. I'm sure at that point all he heard was "Blah, blah, blah, blah."

At 29 years old, he lives in a big city and has very adventurous hobbies. He enjoys backcountry snowboarding, hiking in the mountains, mountain biking and riding his bike to work in downtown city traffic — things that make a mother cringe. When he tells me he's going on one of these adventures, the first thing out of my mouth is "Now be careful!" He knows it's coming, and he has honed his response in such a way that we can laugh about it now.

"Mom, thanks for the advice! Otherwise no telling what may happen! Gee, thanks for saving me this time — good thing I called! That was a close one!" I just laugh and picture him in a few years with little ones. I'll bet he will chuckle to himself a little bit when he starts telling them "Be careful!"

When he tells me he's going on one of these adventures, the first thing out of my mouth is 'Now be careful!'

the horse trough was probably the reason I didn't drown in it. It was always a puzzle why everybody else in the family saw the fish but me.

I would have to say my favorite words of warning that I give to my son are very

A solid choice

By JANE M. DEGENEFFE

Brightly colored florals surround the kitchen walls of Dawn Graber's kitchen. "I wanted to find something inexpensive for decorating, and I found these trays. They're so colorful."

Cheerful and bright, the home of Dave and Dawn Graber pulses with joy. Their four children, Hannah, Sophia, Magnolia and Sam, are recipients of that joy. They move like a well-oiled machine. Sophia, the second oldest, is 9 years old and has a special gift in helping her siblings. Sophia's knack for organizing events, along with her sense of duty, gives her an air of reliability and courage. Magnolia, 7 years old, is close to her sister. Both girls share a sense of responsibility in the care of their big sister, Hannah, 12, and adopted little brother, Sam, 7, who both have severe handicaps. The girls

are very mature for their ages. Mom and Dad have four extra helping hands in the care of their handicapped children.

Inspiring many, the Grabers rely on more than what they see to get them through the difficulties of raising children with disabilities. Dave says there are moments when "... Dawn rescues me and I rescue her. There is a lot of grace, and a lot of love."

In 1997, Dawn carried her firstborn child. They had been married only a couple of years. She had felt no movement within the womb that day and called her doctor instead of waiting for the scheduled office visit that

was coming up. She was 36 weeks along in her pregnancy. Hannah, the Grabers' first child had nearly died. If Dawn had not gone in for an emergency C-section, Hannah would have been dead at birth due to the loss of blood into Dawn's system. These complications resulted in Hannah losing oxygen to her brain. It was called a "severe fetal maternal bleed." Born with cerebral palsy, Hannah, at 12, is nonambulatory and nonverbal, and suffers seizures without her medicine.

Has she ever talked? "When she was 7 she miraculously said 'mom' during a seizure."

Seizures have been one of the many complications of Hannah's condition. Not until recently have they found relief from the seizures. Hannah has medicine put into her gastronomy

tube, or feeding tube. The g-tube connects with a bag of formula.

It carries the necessary nutrients to Han-

nah's body four times a day for two hours, a total of eight hours of feeding time. Hannah has never tasted food. She doesn't know what chocolate pudding tastes like, or ground up Oreo Cookies. In fact, Hannah is incapable of a lot of things. This sorrow is a part of the Graber family's everyday routine. Yet, also ground up in that formula, along with the medicine for seizures, and going

directly to Hannah's living spirit, is what is commonly called love. That is one tasty morsel the Graber family dishes up every day.

Given the fact that Hannah is beautifully complicated, Dawn was inspired to adopt another beautifully complicated child, named Sam. Sam is from Hong Kong. He was found abandoned in a park by a woman who heard him cry. This woman called the police and two single ladies from England took him in. They had moved to Hong Kong with a desire to care for the helpless. The women placed Sam in a home with a foster family before the Grabers adopted him.

"Sam is physically strong," says Dave, whose fathering is as tender as any mother.

Sam has been diagnosed as autistic. He has mental retardation as well as some vision problems. His behavior keeps them very busy. Sam is up every day at 6:30 a.m. and goes to bed at 7 p.m. His energy level is amazing, his curiosity continuous.

This solid choice, love, is something the Graber family accredits to God and their faith in Jesus Christ. "We fight to find our strength in God. It's easy to find it in our own selves. The evidence of His blessings in our life is so consistent. In each experience or trial, God has blessed us," said Dave.

“Dave says there are moments when ‘... Dawn rescues me and I rescue her. There is a lot of grace, and a lot of love.’”



Dave and Dawn Graber with their children, from left, Sophia, Magnolia, Sam and Hannah.

By Jane M. Degeneffe/Special to Facets



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Family: Married to Mike Coverdale; foster-parented two Vietnamese kids, have hostparented dozens of international students from all over the world, remain connected to our families of origin, and have found wonderful family in our community. We have a global family!

What would you do with \$1,000 to spend on yourself?

Something frivolous – buy a piece of nice jewelry.

1. Your favorite meal:

Mike's Pad Thai

2. I never leave home without:

A hug

3. Your favorite motto: To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower.
— William Blake

4. What makes you happy? Knowing I'm loved, and being affirmed.

5. What makes you feel confident?

Having customers respond so positively to the things I design, and laugh at the humor in my products. I love getting "fan letters."

6. What makes you laugh? Lots of things ... I smile and laugh easily. I have a good sense of humor — and I like to remember to

laugh at myself.

7. What have you accomplished that has made you proud? Starting a now-well-established business with \$600.

8. Do you believe in New Year's resolutions? Do you have one this year? Yes. Sew down the fabric stash.

9. Best tip to look and feel great: A fresh spa pedicure!

10. How do you take care of yourself financially? Live within my means.



Jeanne with a customer at a trade show in summer of 2009.

11. If you could do or be anything you want, what would it be? I'm happy being me.

12. How do you reward yourself? Leisure travel, from short getaways nearby to travel abroad. It's great reward for working hard.

13. My idea of a nightmare job: Insurance sales.

14. My simplest pleasure: Drinks and dinner on the screen porch on summer evenings. We can hear the clink of the bat from high school baseball games, and the frogs at the pond behind our house. Love it!

15. I secretly love: It's no secret — I love all things Irish, I love going to Ireland, and I'm proud of my Irish heritage.

16. I am thankful for: Having a good marriage to a good person, and living in a place that offers freedom and opportunity.

17. Favorite wardrobe staple: Shoes.

18. What financial advice would you give other women? Slow and steady wins the race.

19. What kind of chocolate do you like/prefer? Dark chocolate.



From left, Jeanne Coverdale with her sons, Hiep and Adamu, and her husband, Mike.



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No matter what your situation is The Ames Contracting Team can help...

Joyce Rasmussen's kitchen was in dire need of a facelift when the Ames Contracting Team stepped in. "My kitchen was stuck in the 1980's," Rasmussen recalled. "I wanted to bring it into this century." On the advice of a friend, Rasmussen made one call to Oren Geisinger and soon had the expertise of Geisinger Construction, Benjamin Franklin Plumbing, Thompson Electric, and Flooring Gallery at her disposal.

"This was the first time I had done a remodel project with a contractor. Oren was so polite and the estimate was well within what I could afford," said Rasmussen.

Rasmussen has chosen to complete her remodel gradually to make the project more affordable. "I work at a church," she laughed, underscoring the importance of sticking to a tight budget. Ames Contracting Team was happy to work with her to develop a plan that met her expectations and financial needs.

During the first phase of remodeling Thompson Electric added recess lighting to the formerly dark kitchen; Geisinger Construction installed new countertops and an attractive back-

splash; and Benjamin Franklin Plumbing added a new kitchen sink.

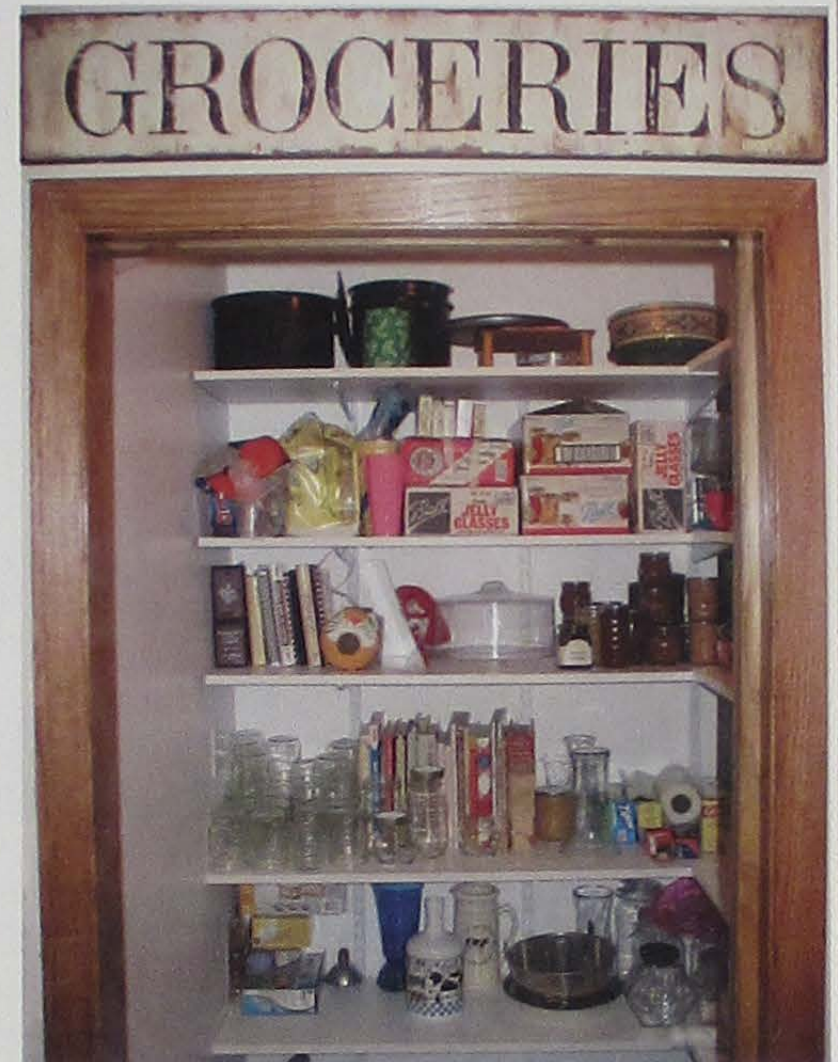
Phase two focused on storage space. Rasmussen explained that, though her home is not small, storage space in the kitchen was limited, inconvenient, and dated. Glass was added to cabinet doors and a large pantry was created, "They had some good ideas," Rasmussen said of the team. The pantry borrows space from the attached garage, giving new life to an underutilized area of the home. "It was a great way to pull everything together," Rasmussen said.

She praised the good communication she had with all members of the team throughout both phases of her project. "They always called me with questions," she said. "I very much appreciated that."

She was also impressed with the character of all the workers. "They were very polite young men," she explained, adding that the care they took cleaning at the end of each work day made her house useable throughout the entire process.

Rasmussen is not finished with ACT just yet. Flooring is the plans for phase three. For now, however, she is content

to enjoy her modern, new kitchen. "Everything is so much more convenient and its a much more updated look," she said.



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Definition: Any loud clamor or protest intended to incite others to action.

BY MARY HALSTRUM, *Facets Editor*



This month, the theme of Facets is motherhood in honor of Mother's Day, which falls on May 9.

Motherhood is by far the most challenging job and most rewarding experience I've had during my lifetime. Being a mother has brought great joy to me, and in the future, I'm certain, might bring great heartache as well. After all, my daughters most likely will make a few bad decisions along their journeys as I certainly did growing up. Thankfully, none of my questionable decisions were life altering in a negative way. I can only hope the same for my girls.

As I've gotten older, I've begun to appreciate my own mother more and more. Granted, she wasn't a perfect mother, but then again, who is? But she did the best she could with limited resources, and for the past 20 or so years she has been my best friend and most trusted confidante. The relationship I have with her is one of the most important in my life.

The relationships I have with my daughters, Katharine, 8, and Rachel, 4, are also

of utmost importance to me. Every time I see them it seems that I can't help but find something new and completely fascinating about them. Watching them grow and change over the years and seeing them tackle tasks such as learning to ride a bike or making Jell-o, they continue to amaze me.

Of course, my daughters also drive me absolutely crazy a lot of the time. For instance, it never fails that as soon as I need to make a phone call is the precise moment they decide to start an argument over some random little thing, like Rachel took Katharine's favorite red crayon and won't give it back. Or someone took the last Hershey's Kiss. Or how about when I am downstairs walking on the treadmill and within five minutes they're both bugging me to get them this or get them that.

It's like they have Mommy radar, which alerts them to the fact that "Mommy is busy doing something else, and that something else doesn't have anything to do with us! We must stop her from doing whatever she's doing!" So when I'm not smothering

them with hugs and kisses and loving on them, they're driving me crazy. That's pretty much

what being a mother is like for me. But that's OK, because I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world.

The hopes and dreams I have for my daughters are simple, really. I hope they both grow up to be compassionate and kind, that they have high self-esteem and believe in themselves no matter what, that they have empathy for all living things, that their lives are filled with more joy than pain, and that someday they will become mothers themselves and experience the kind of happiness they have brought to my life.

And hopefully they remember all the hugs, kisses and kind words I gave them over the years more than they remember the scowls and stern lectures. After all, I'm doing the best I can with what I have, and that's really all any mother can do.



Saturday, June 19, 2010

Mary Greeley Fest is a community fair with a twist. In addition to healthy living information and wellness screens from health professionals, you will find ambulance and fire truck tours, bike helmet giveaways and prizes. Come join us for food, entertainment, children's games and fun for all ages.

9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Bandshell Park, 125 E. 5th St., Ames, IA

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